

Standing Strong When the Door to Your Dream Slams Shut

This past year has been difficult, to say the least. It has felt like a tsunami of problems slammed into my reality, and I was pulled out to the deep, struggling to keep my head above water. At times, I felt it would be easier to drown than try to stay afloat. But what I've come to realize is that God has never let go of me, even on those days when I've felt like waiting on Him to intervene was almost more frustrating than dealing with the circumstances at hand.

Sometimes it's the waiting on God that helps us become strong enough in our faith to endure the wait at all.

This is what I gleaned recently from my precious friend Wendy Pope's book titled *Wait and See: Finding Peace in God's Pauses and Plans*. Her book came at the perfect time for me, and it actually served as a sign that God was indeed intervening, just in different ways than I had asked for. I didn't need to keep feeling as though I were waiting for Him to do something, because behind the scenes of my life—scenes which I am not capable of seeing—God was indeed doing things on my behalf.

In chapter 4, Wendy's words were a comfort to my heart when she acknowledged that not only do we all grow weary of waiting at times—especially during difficult times when we desperately want God to act and fix our problems, and it seems He is silent—but that it is perfectly normal for us all to do so. And more importantly, God understands.

Just in case, like me, you are in a season of waiting on God to show you why you are enduring something hard or what His plans are or why doors aren't opening or why it seems He isn't answering those gut-wrenching prayers for which you've prayed for years, I wanted to share Wendy's insight about what we

tend to do when the wait is long, arduous, confusing and frustrating. These are obstacles we tend to struggle with when we are honestly just tired of waiting on God to show us His plans, purpose or goodness—all of which are promised to us in Scripture.

Wendy shares five obstacles most of us struggle with when we are forced to endure a long wait for what our hearts desire most. And they are:

Obstacle 1: When we are weary of waiting on God, we waver.

In Wendy's words, "When the wait is long or filled with obstacles, the temptation comes to bail out and stop following God." She explained how our wavering thoughts get in the way of us staying on the right path. One day we're trying to trust God's ways, and the next we're wondering what He is thinking. One day we feel confident and like we can get through this, then the next day we feel like God has abandoned us and we'll never make it through. One day we are OK with where God has us, and the next day a new problem rages in and strips away our peace. One day we love God and believe we are His beloved, and the next day we wonder if He even sees or loves us at all. She encouraged me by saying, "Each day provides a myriad of opportunities to lean on God's understanding than our own." I don't want my wavering thoughts to steer me not only away from God, but away from the peace and joy He wants me to have even in the midst of difficulties.

Obstacle 2: When we are weary of waiting on God, we fear.

Those wavering thoughts eventually turn into fear even though Scripture constantly reminds us not to fear. Fear keeps us bound and fuels our doubts about God's goodness and sovereignty. As Wendy says, we can always trust an unknown future to a known God every time, so fear is not necessary or helpful. I don't want to let fear keep me from experiencing joy, even when my circumstances don't feel joyful, while I'm

waiting on God's plan to come to fruition. Less fear gives way for more peace in the wait.

Obstacle 3: When we are weary of waiting on God, we lack confidence.

I can't tell you how much my confidence has been shaken lately. Like Wendy, there was a season when I allowed doubt to dwarf my confidence. Some days I've had to fight the urge to focus on all my imperfections or shortcomings rather than all the good things God created about me. Or fight the urge to focus on the hurtful words or actions other people said or did and allow that to shape how I see myself and my worth, rather than seeing my worth and value through God's eyes. I don't want my lack of confidence—shaken by the broken world we live in and the lost people in it—to bury so deep in my soul that it prevents me from having the confidence I need to stay strong in the Lord's strength and confident in who I am in the Lord.

Obstacle 4: When we are weary of waiting on God, we can become self-focused.

Focusing on our wants, needs and desires is one thing, but when we begin to focus not only on when God doesn't meet those wants, needs and desires, but also on when He meets other people's needs and desires, we will begin to feel jealous. We begin to think God isn't fair. Why did they get a blessing, and I didn't? Why did He answer their prayers and not mine? We may not want to admit it, but we've all done it, no matter what "thing" we are asking God for. I don't want to let my focus on self become a hindrance in my faith walk, even when it seems God is fairer to someone else than He is to me.

Obstacle 5: When we are weary of waiting on God, we may struggle with unbelief.

When the Israelites made their exit from Egypt and escaped slavery, God knew they might change their minds and return to

Egypt when they stumbled across some of these obstacles. He knew that unbelief would rear its ugly head, and it did. In *Wait and See*, Wendy wrote this regarding the last obstacle of unbelief, which struck a chord in my heart: "They surveyed the long, dusty road ahead and allowed themselves to be overwhelmed by the impossibility of the situation rather than believing in the God of possibilities." I don't want my unbelief to blind me to the God of possibilities, do you? It's such a sweet reminder that anything is possible in Christ and with Christ, but it usually does require us to wait. Let's not let the wait rob of us believing God for the impossible.

Waiting on God is hard. Waiting on answered prayers or blessings or glimpses of hope is hard. In fact, maybe even beyond hard. Trust me, friend, I know. But God is still God. His ways are not our ways, even when we can't understand them. We have to trust He knows best, even when it comes to unanswered prayers, hurting hearts, disappointment and closed doors. And even when we have a long, arduous wait before we catch even the tiniest glimpse of His plan to use our wait for good.

Are you struggling with any of these obstacles? It's OK. That doesn't make you a bad believer, it simply makes you normal, but don't let it make you pull away from God. Instead, let the wait pull you closer. The closer we are to God, the more we can trust His ways instead of doubt them.

I don't want to stumble over any of the obstacles of wavering thoughts, fear, lack of confidence, self-focus or unbelief, and I bet you don't either. But if you are stumbling, as we all have, and feeling frustrated while waiting on God to intervene, then *Wait and See* might be the perfect book for you for such a time as this. Just like it was for me. So I hope you check it out for yourself.

Waiting well teaches us to trust His delays rather than doubt His ways.

*Waiting on God isn't wasting time, it's training time.
Keeping company with God is how we learn to wait well, fight
our inner battles and find rest.*

*Things don't always turn out the way we planned, but things
always turn out as God planned*

—Wendy Pope

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